

Message Text

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ACTION TRSE-00

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 NEA-14 ISO-00 IO-14 AID-20 CIAE-00

COME-00 EB-11 FRB-03 INR-11 NSAE-00 RSC-01 XMB-07

OPIC-12 SP-03 CIEP-03 LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01 NSC-07

SS-20 STR-08 CEA-02 L-03 H-03 PA-04 PRS-01 USIA-15

DRC-01 /183 W

----- 032242

P R 230515Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6405

INFO AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL LAHORE

AMEMBASSY MANILA

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MANILA PASS USADB

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ECRE, PK

SUBJECT: TARBELA DAM PROBLEMS

1. SUMMARY. PROBLEMS RELATED TO TARBELA'S FOUR TUNNELS COULD CAUSE SERIOUS DELAY AND ADDITIONAL COST TO TARBELA DAM PROJECT AND HAVE REPERCUSSIONS ON US IMAGE. TARBELA LAKE BEING DRAINED AFTER ALMOST FILLING UP. BHUTTO DESCRIBES SITUATION AS "TERRIBLE SETBACK BUT TEMPORARY ONE." TWO US ENGINEERING FIRMS INVOLVED: TAMS RESPONSIBLE FOR DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION SUPERVISION AND HARZA GENERAL CONSULTANT TO OWNER (WAPDA). PAK PRESS HAS TIED SUICIDE OF TAMS AMCIT ENGINEER TO PROBLEMS. END SUMMARY.

2. USAID CHIEF ENGINEER AND EMB ECONOFF DISCUSSED PROBLEMS AT TARBELA SITE AUGUST 21 WITH BURGE KEPFORD,
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RESIDENT ENGINEER HARZA ENGINEERING, GENERAL CONSULTANT

TO WAPDA AND LEARNED FOLLOWING. DAM HAS FOUR TUNNELS, NUMBERS ONE AND TWO OF WHICH DESIGNED TO SUPPLY WATER TO POWER PLANTS. TUNNELS THREE AND FOUR DESIGNED AT PRESENT FOR IRRIGATION WITH NUMBER THREE TO BE CONVERTED LATER FOR POWER PURPOSES.

3. BECAUSE TUNNELS ONE AND TWO WERE USED TO DIVERT RIVER FLOW DURING DAM COMPLETION, CONTRACTOR DID NOT INSTALL MAIN GATES AT MID-TUNNEL DURING PAST DRY SEASON. HE DECIDED TO USE INLET GATES OF EACH TUNNEL FOR CLOSURE. DURING TESTING PERIOD INLET GATES WERE STICKING. AT TIME OF VISIT ONE OF TUNNEL ONE GATES WAS STUCK AT TWO FEET OPEN AND ONE OF TUNNEL TWO GATES STUCK AT 28 FEET OPEN AND WAS DISCHARGING ABOUT 42,000 CUSECS WATER. KEPFORD INFORMED EMBASSY BY TELECON MORNING OF AUGUST 22 THAT GATES ON TUNNEL TWO HAD GIVEN WAY. VOLUME OF WATER THROUGH TUNNEL TWO NOW ESTIMATED 180,000 CUSECS, A FLOW GREATER THAN THE RIVER FLOW INTO THE RESERVOIR, WHICH IS ESTIMATED AT 100,000 CUSECS.

4. TUNNELS THREE AND FOUR HAVE BEEN CLOSED DOWN DUE TO SEVERE CONCRETE EROSION WHICH PROBABLY UNRELATED TO ABOVE. TUNNELS THREE AND FOUR HAVE MAIN GATES INSTALLED AND TWO EACH OUTLET GATES. STEEL LINING 40 FEET DOWNSTREAM FROM OUTLET GATES LOOSE ON ALL FOUR OUTLETS AND RIPPED FROM FLOOR AND ONE WALL OF ONE OF TUNNEL THREE OUTLETS. CONCRETE LINING ON TUNNEL FLOOR DOWNSTREAM FROM STEEL-LINED PORTION SEVERELY ERODED NECESSITATING SHUTDOWN TUNNELS THREE AND FOUR.

5. ON MORNING AUGUST 22 PM BHUTTO AND OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WENT TO TARBELA SITE TO DISCUSS EMERGENCY SITUATION RESULTING FROM FAILURE OF GATES IN TUNNEL TWO. DECISION MADE TO OPEN GATES IN TUNNEL ONE TO DRAIN LAKE. IT WILL REQUIRE ABOUT 20 DAYS TO REDUCE THE LEVEL OF THE LAKE TO WHERE THE TUNNELS MAY BE INSPECTED. BHUTTO AND MINISTER FOR PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS PIRZADE ISSUED ASSURANCES THAT THIS DISCHARGE WOULD BE CONSIDERABLY BELOW FLOOD STAGE. PIRZADA MADE LENGTHY WELL-BALANCED STATEMENT TO SPECIAL EVENING SESSION OF PARLIAMENT OUTLINING HISTORY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF PROBLEM. HE STATED GOP HAS THE FINEST CONTRACTING AND CONSULTING EXPERTS FROM EUROPE AND AMERICA ON THE PROJECT AND THE PROPER APPROACH AT THIS TIME WAS TO LET THESE EXPERTS STUDY THE PROBLEM AND SET IT RIGHT WITHOUT POLITICAL INTERFERENCE.

6. EXPERTS ON DAMS REPRESENTING ALL PARTIES INVOLVED HAVE STARTED ARRIVING AT TARBELA TO DETERMINE EXTENT OF DAMAGE

AND PROBABLE CAUSES AND TO RECOMMEND SOLUTIONS. PENDING
THEIR FINDINGS UNABLE SPECULATE ON COST OF REPAIRS,
DELAYS IN PROJECT COMPLETION AND ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES
FOR FAILURES.

7. PAK PRESS STORIES STATE "FOREIGN" ENGINEER COMMITTED
SUICIDE AND LEFT BEHIND LETTER DISCLOSING ERROR IN DESIGN.
IT IS TRUE THAT AMCIT ENGINEER WILLIAM C. SHAPIRO COMMITTED
SUICIDE JULY 28. HE CONDUCTED MODEL TESTS FOR THE TAMS
GROUP THAT IS NOW SUPERVISING CONSTRUCTION. HIS DEATH
OCCURRED PRIOR TO SURFACING OF SERIOUS PROBLEMS.
BYROADE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CONSTRUCTION, DAMS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 AUG 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: boyleja
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974ISLAMA08105
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740232-1167
From: ISLAMABAD
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740823/aaaaatmm.tel
Line Count: 127
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION TRSE
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: boyleja
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09-Aug-2002 by worrelsw>; APPROVED <03 MAR 2003 by boyleja>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TARBELA DAM PROBLEMS
TAGS: ECRE, PK, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005